

# **River Basin Natural Resource District Oversight Advisory Task Force**

## **Study Assignment**

The River Basin Natural Resource District Oversight Advisory Task Force was created by the 2015 Legislature. The legislation that was passed (Senate Bill 2) assigned the following tasks to the task force for the 2015 interim:

- (1) To recommend to the 2016 Legislature the specific boundaries for the river basin natural resource districts;
- (2) To recommend to the 2016 Legislature how to divide each district into three subdistricts of nearly equal size of population;
- (3) To recommend to the 2016 Legislature a procedure by which initial terms of a district council shall be staggered; and
- (4) To work with the local governments in the Red River and Minnesota River Basin Natural Resource District to establish a pilot water management plan for the district that could be used as a guide for a water management plan in each of the remaining river basin natural resource districts.

## **Summary of Interim**

At the task force's first meeting, the task force elected Ms. Kim Vanneman as chair and Representative John Wiik was elected vice chair. The task force reviewed the legislation that established the task force and the tasks assigned to the task force. The committee also reviewed the history of the Regional Watershed Advisory Task Force and the work of that task force over the past three years.

The task force was informed that LRC staff would have maps and data available at the task force's next meeting to assist the task force in formulating their recommendations regarding district and subdistrict boundaries.

The chair of the task force appointed a pilot water management plan subcommittee consisting of Senator Frerichs, Representative McCleerey, Representative Wiik, and the chair to meet with some of the interested entities in the northeast part of the state to do some ground work to facilitate a pilot plan. That subcommittee met September 28<sup>th</sup> in Milbank.

At the task force's second meeting, the task force received a report from the subcommittee. The subcommittee met with a number of interested parties in the Red River and Minnesota River basin areas at the Milbank meeting. The discussion, at this subcommittee meeting, was centered on the idea that the main focus of a river basin council should be water quantity and water quality in the river basin. The subcommittee reported that a water management plan should define what is known about water quantity and quality in the river basin, define what the council needs to learn, and outline the process to identify all the governmental and private entities interested in water quantity and quality in the river

basin and to meet with these entities to identify water quantity and quality problems and opportunities in the river basin. The subcommittee presented to the task force a possible river basin planning process that could be used by a river basin council in any district to create a plan.

The task force was informed that the mapping software program used to create the district boundaries and subdistrict boundaries had crashed just prior to the second meeting. Consequently, the anticipated maps were not available to be reviewed by the task force. The task force was able to review some early draft maps to get an idea of the mapping process. It was the consensus of the task force that the district boundaries should be drawn based on township boundaries as much as possible. It was also the consensus of the task force to have staff split the districts into subdistricts primarily using townships but also using voting districts and highways where they worked better.

The plan was for the task force to review the maps at the November 23<sup>rd</sup> meeting. However, continuing computer software problems did not allow for these maps to be posted for interested parties prior to that meeting. That meeting was postponed until December 11<sup>th</sup>.

The task force also discussed council member terms, the initial staggering of those terms, and the number of members on each council. The consensus of the task force was that the total number of council members in each district should be set at six with each subdistrict having two council members. The terms would be staggered. For the first election, one term in each subdistrict would be a two-year term and the other would be a four-year term. Thereafter, all terms would be for four years.

The task force's final meeting will be December 11<sup>th</sup>. The task force will be considering legislation to establish the river basin district boundaries and subdistrict boundaries and to recommend a procedure by which the initial terms of a district council are staggered.

### **Listing of Legislation Adopted**

Proposed draft legislation will be addressed at the task force's December 11<sup>th</sup> meeting.

### **Summary of Meeting Dates and Places**

The task force met in Pierre on the following dates this interim: August 13, October 16, and December 11, 2015.

### **Listing of Task Force Members**

Members of the task force are Kim Vanneman (Chair); Representative John Wiik (Vice Chair); Senators Jason Frerichs and Arthur Rusch; Representative Steven McCleerey; and Paul Casper, Karl Jensen, and Dennis Kiner.

### **Listing of Staff Members**

Staff members for the task force were David Ortbahn, Chief of Research and Legal Services; Amanda Jacobs, Research Analyst; Jason Simmons, Senior Fiscal Analyst; Roxanne Hammond, Legislative Attorney; and Kris Schneider, Senior Legislative Secretary.